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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 11/04/09

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- (1) Agitated public opinion on Futenma relocation (Part 1): Kadena town forms united front with U.S. forces to oppose merger plan

MAINICHI (Top play, page 24) (Full)  
November 4, 2009

Mayor Tokujitsu Miyagi, 73, was talking face-to-face with Brig. Gen. Ken Wilsbach, commander of Kadena Air Base (KAB), which straddles

the town of Kadena and two other municipalities in Okinawa, at the commander's office in the late afternoon on Oct. 5. Miyagi handed the commander a document entitled "scenario for the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station out of Japan." Miyagi told him that "the parliamentary secretary for defense will go to Washington with this document shortly."

This document is about the proposal on merging the Futenma base with KAB, which calls for merging the Futenma base in Ginowan City with KAB with a time limit of 15 years, after which Futenma will be moved to Guam or the U.S. mainland; transferring 28 F-15 fighters on KAB to other bases and banning exercises by non-KAB-based aircraft to reduce noise; and the return of bases south of KAB. These items are included in the charts and graphs.

The commander laughed. "Is the Japanese government trying to poke its nose into U.S. military affairs?" Miyagi responded in all seriousness: "You should watch out and notify Washington before the parliamentary secretary goes there." Wilsbach began to change to a serious expression. "This is unacceptable. I will notify (Washington) immediately."

Miyagi obtained a copy of the document on the previous day, Oct. 4. People's New Party policy chief Mikio Shimoji, 48, who was elected from the first district of Okinawa, reportedly brought the proposal to him.

Shimoji asked Miyagi to "look at the big picture when making a decision" and told him that Parliamentary Secretary of Defense Akihisa Nagashima would be taking this plan to Washington soon.

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Shimoji has refused to comment on the meeting on Oct. 4 but stated that the United States' position on U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) realignment is "not that the Kadena merger plan will not work, but that it is set on relocation to Henoko, no matter what, and is applying considerable pressure."

The Kadena integration plan also emerged once back in 1996, when the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed on the complete return of Futenma. However, this plan fizzled out because of the opposition of the local communities in Kadena and the other municipalities, and the USFJ disapproved of the joint use of KAB, where the Air Force's fighters are stationed, with the Marines, which mostly use helicopters.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada revived the proposal on the KAB merger plan as an option for Futenma relocation on Oct. 23, 18 days after the meeting between Miyagi and Wilsbach. Miyagi, who is against the merger plan, took preemptive action immediately after he received the document. He chose the USFJ, the target of his frequent protests about noise, as his partner in this "united front."

Miyagi explains that, "The commander, and not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), is the best party to convey the local community's opposition to the Kadena merger plan accurately." The USFJ is preferred over MOFA. Behind this decision is deep-rooted distrust of the Japanese government.

The noise generated by KAB has long been a problem for the local communities. There has been a long history of the remedies taken by the government either being rendered toothless or unenforced.

The KAB integration proposal has suddenly emerged as a relocation option for the Futenma Air Station located in the center of Ginowan City. It is said that the reason why Mayor Miyagi, who wants to block this plan, chose the KAB commander as his united front partner is because the Japanese government has "betrayed" him with regard to measures to deal with noise generated by KAB. A recent joint public opinion poll by Mainichi Shimbun and Ryukyu Shimpo shows that over 70 percent of respondents were opposed to the Kadena merger plan. Public opinion in the localities hosting the largest U.S. Air Force base in the Far East is becoming agitated.

The Japanese and U.S. governments agreed on measures to regulate aircraft noise in March 1996 with the aim of reducing noise

generated by KAB and the Futenma base. The agreement calls for restrictions on flights and ground operations between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., but this does not apply in cases where the USFJ has "operational needs." Night and early morning flights have taken place on KAB based on this exception. The town government has monitored 2,000-3,000 instances of noise in the early morning and at night annually.

Furthermore, the 2006 final report on USFJ realignment calls for "reducing the burden imposed by the KAB" by sending one to five F-15 fighters based on KAB to conduct exercises on six Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) bases on the Japanese mainland for one to seven days 12 times in a year and sending 6-12 F-15 fighters for exercises on ASDF bases for 8-14 days three times a year. However, 39,359 instances of noise were still monitored in the Yara district in fiscal 2008, up from 32,549 instances in FY2007. This noise is mainly caused by non-KAB-based aircraft flying to the base for exercises.

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Miyagi says: "We were betrayed with regard to noise regulation, as well as USFJ realignment. Our expectations for the government have turned into disappointment. Noise will be reduced after Kadena merger? That's nonsense. We cannot believe in such talk," chortled the mayor, who approves of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements "to a certain extent."

Sunabe district in the town of Chatan is a seaside community lying on the extension line from KAB's runways. It suffers from the highest level of noise among the neighborhoods in the vicinity of KAB. Shoji Matsuda, 64, the district chief still remembers the deafening noise during the B-52 bomber crash 41 years ago. "The W index (weighted equivalent continuous perceived noise, or WECPN level) recorded was 95." Window panes rattled loudly. "It's not just the noise. I can understand that the Futenma Air Station is dangerous, but why are they moving this base to dangerous Kadena, where accidents have not ceased to occur? Isn't this absurd?"

At a news conference on Oct. 27, Okada cited the merit of the Kadena merger plan, saying: "I think there is great merit in merging the two major bases on Okinawa." It seems that there is a huge gap between the mainland and Okinawa and between Tokyo and the local officials with regard to the reduction of the burden on Okinawa that the government is talking about.

(2) Editorial: Concerns over foreign and security policies linger on

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
November 3, 2009

Full-fledged question-and-answer sessions were launched at meeting of the House of Representatives Budget Committee (held yesterday). Taking up mainly the foreign and security policies of the Hatoyama cabinet, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) asked questions about its handling of the issue of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan and other matters. There were scenes in which Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama avoided giving specific answers. If the administration's basic policies remain ambiguous, concerns will continue to linger on.

LDP Secretary General Tadamori Oshima pressed the Prime Minister to explain how his administration is going to review the existing plan to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in the city of Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture) to the Henoko district (in the city of Nago in the prefecture).

The Prime Minister expressed a plan to seek common ground from the viewpoint of reducing the gravity of the Japan-U.S. agreement and the burden on local residents. He also indicated that nothing has been decided on the matter, saying that the government is exploring various options. The Prime Minister also avoided announcing a clear deadline for reaching a conclusion by repeatedly noting, "I'm not saying it's a good idea to postpone the deadline irresponsibly."

Oshima repeatedly criticized the Hatoyama cabinet's responses,

saying, "Although the cabinet has indicated that the Japan-U.S. alliance is the cornerstone (of Japan's foreign policy), the situation raises serious concerns." Oshima also pointed out that the Prime Minister's statements expressing eagerness to review the existing plan and to postpone considering alternatives might increase the distrust of people concerned. We agree with Oshima.

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Former Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, who took the floor as a questioner after Oshima, asked, "What exactly does your statement that Japan was too dependent on the United States mean?" In response, the Prime Minister cited the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and Japan's support for the United States in the Iraq war. Machimura rebutted that Japan decided them on its own as a member of the international community.

Machimura urged the government to continue the refueling mission beyond its expiration in January 2010, stressing that there is no other activity that is as safe and cost effective and is highly regarded by the international community.

Voters are supportive of the policies that the Democratic Party of Japan places priority on, such as shifting power away from bureaucrats and cutting administrative wasteful spending. Many in the opposition camp are also showing their understanding of them. At the same time, it goes without saying that the government is required to give consideration to its relations with the international community, including the United States, when shifting the country's foreign and security policies.

The Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers' inconsistent statements might give the impression that Japan is in turmoil and undermine the country's national interests as a result. The Prime Minister should take steps to bring the situation under control, including the U.S. force realignment and support for international efforts to combat terrorism, before being urged to do so by the opposition camp.

There were hardly any questions about the issue of money and politics on the first day. We hope to see the overall picture of the falsified donations reported by Prime Minister's fund management organization uncovered through future debates.

(3) Editorial: We would like to see a concerted effort to support the New Afghanistan administration

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
November 4, 2009

Afghanistan's election commission decided to cancel the runoff for president slated for Nov. 7 and proclaimed the reelection of incumbent President Karzai, who came in first in the first round of the election in August.

This exceptional decision was made following former foreign minister Abdullah's announcement he was pulling out. Another element contributing to the decision was that major terrorist attacks by the Taliban, an Islamic fundamentalist group, had been expected.

The cancellation of the runoff was regrettable in the sense of clarifying the legitimacy of the new administration. However, the U.S. administration has announced its stance of continuing support to the nation. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, now in Afghanistan, categorically said, "A new administration must be launched promptly." The international community should make an all-out effort to support the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

The U.S. military caused the collapse of the Taliban administration, which was harboring Al-Qaeda, an international terrorist group that

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carried out the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. However, the Taliban militants are gradually regaining strength. In the past

several months victims of terrorist attacks have increased at the worst pace.

Deteriorating security in Afghanistan is hampering the rebuilding of the nation through support by various countries. The Taliban militants, the root cause of terrorism in Afghanistan, must be rooted out in order to cut off the negative spiral of terrorism.

U.S. President Obama will announce a plan to reinforce U.S. military personnel stationed in Afghanistan to 68,000 before the year end. However, it would be logical to shift leadership for the brunt of maintaining security from the U.S. military to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and later to Afghanistan's national military.

Upon hearing the reelection of President Karzai, President Obama, referring to the collusive nature of the Karzai administration in the past, called for a serious effort to eradicate bribery and a joint effort for the strengthening of the training of a security force. This is only natural.

Once security is restored, people's livelihood must be stabilized. South Korea's Lee Myung Bak administration, which advocates strengthening its alliance with the U.S., has decided to re-send about 300 soldiers to protect civilians of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. The South Korean administration makes a sharp contrast with the Hatoyama administration, which has decided to end refueling operations in the Indian Ocean in January next year. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has stressed civilian support to Afghanistan. However, he also said that he would not dispatch Self-Defense Force personnel. If that is the case, it would be impossible for Japan to extend effective support.

President Karzai categorically said that he would aim for an all-nation cabinet. However, Afghanistan doesn't need words. It needs support from the international community and the ability to govern so that it can live up to expectations.

(4) Senior U.S. State Department official's emphasis on APEC's importance and cooperation with Japan seen as attempt to counter East Asian Community concept

JIIJ.COM (Full)  
12:08, November 4, 2009

Washington - The State Department's Kurt Tong, deputy U.S. representative in charge of preparations for the APEC summit in Singapore on Nov. 14-15, gave a news conference in Washington on Nov. 3. He emphasized the importance of APEC and said that Japan and the U.S., which will host the APEC summit in 2010 and 2011, respectively, will cooperate to achieve the best possible results.

The U.S. government has concerns about the concept of the East Asian Community advocated by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. It appears that Tong's remark may be aimed at countering this concept.

Tong rated APEC very highly, calling it "extremely beneficial." With Japan and the U.S. hosting the APEC summit in 2010 and 2011, he stressed that "we have great expectations for what APEC can accomplish in two years."

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Tong also announced that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk will participate in the ministerial meeting to be held before the APEC summit, and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner will participate in the finance ministers' talks.

(5) Editorial: 63rd anniversary of proclamation of Constitution - Discussion on constitutional revision should not be suppressed

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
November 3, 2009

Today marks the 63rd anniversary of the proclamation of the

Constitution of Japan. Although Japan faces such threats as North Korea's nuclear and missile development and China's military buildup, discussion on the Constitution, which stipulates the rules of the nation, is being suppressed.

In the current Diet session, the Constitution Research Councils of both houses have not been launched yet. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and other opposition parties moved to block the activities of standing panels set up in August, 2007 under the Diet Law. The agreement reached by the DPJ and the other ruling parties to form their coalition government only mentioned confirming principles such as pacifism, but stopped short of mentioning how the government should deal with the research councils.

Social Democratic Party President Mizuho Fukushima, who insisted in talks on forming a coalition government on the need to freeze activities by the councils, has begun to emphasize: "The SDP will never allow the Constitution Research Councils to be put into operation as long as the party is in the administration."

The referendum law will come into effect on May 18 of next year. Under this law, it will become possible for lawmakers to present proposals for revising the Constitution. The Diet takes responsibility for presenting a clear vision for the nation based on due legal procedures. If the DPJ intends to try to prevent such efforts by the Diet in line with the SDP's position, it is extremely regrettable.

The DPJ and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) have the big responsibility of launching constitutional debate to enable lawmakers to present draft proposals for amending the Constitution.

The DPJ is now urged to consider whether resolving numerous thorny issues facing Japan is possible under the terms of the Constitution, which the Allied Occupation's General Headquarters (GHQ) forced on Japan immediately after the end of the war.

"We must bring about a change of government and make the political situation stable so that politicians can discuss constitutional issues," Yukio Hatoyama noted in the DPJ's email magazine this March, when he was secretary general of the party. In his book titled: "A New Constitution Draft," Hatoyama expresses a willingness to maintain the Self-Defense Force and to reorganize the governing system. After coming into office, however, the prime minister has indicated no intention to address constitutional problems. On the issue of whether the existing government interpretation of the Constitution should be changed to enable Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense, as well, Hatoyama revealed that he has

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no intention to change the interpretation during a meeting of the House of Representatives' Budget Committee yesterday. This reflects his priority to maintain the coalition government over considering the future of the nation. Based on this stance, Hatoyama has allowed the SDP to openly advocate the need to prevent revisions to the Constitution.

Why has the LDP refrained from pursuing the spirit adopted when the party advocated constitutional reform and established a conservative government in 1955? The LDP probably remains inactive toward this challenge because LDP President Sadakazu Tanigaki remains cautious about changing the government interpretation.

The LDP needs to draft a basic plan for how this nation should be reformed. The party must also prepare itself to implement its plan as a conservative party and develop its ability to think on the grand scale. Demonstrating these abilities is the only way the LDP will be able to revive itself.

ROOS